TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR VS. TRANSFORMATIONAL GRAMMAR

A CHOICE OR A COMPROMISE

AN ABSTRACT OF

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Curriculum must reflect current thought either by acceptance or rejection of it. The decision for or against the new material must be based on a thorough examination of it and its application to a particular curriculum. In the case of a language arts program, there must be constant examination of content, simply because language is dynamic and always changing.

Teachers must have some knowledge of linguistics in order to evaluate a language program. It is not the tools and techniques of the linguist that should concern the English teacher, but the application of knowledge about language which linguistic theories provide.

The goals for a particular language program must be clearly defined before deciding how those objectives can be met.

The meaning of grammar must also be defined. The grammarian is concerned with minute and thorough analysis of the sentence, whereas the English teacher must incorporate this subject matter into a broad-based language program.

Traditional grammar began with the ancient Greeks. It is generally regarded as the parts of speech approach to grammar and is the most widely taught system of linguistic methodology.

Traditional grammar is defended for its social utility. It is also defended as an aid in understanding the past. Traditionalists argue, too, that vulgate is deficient in all artistic qualities except vigor and is likewise deficient in intellectual breadth and depth.

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Structural grammar, a theory which historically precedes that of transformational grammar, has made valuable contributions to the study of language. It differs from traditional and transformational grammars which claim their bases to be logic and intuition. Structuralists differ from traditionalists who emphasize the historical importance of grammar development and usage. In their description of the way language is they differ from the transformationalists who are concerned with the way language operates.

Structuralists are credited with insisting the study of language be divided into two parts: syntax and semantics. They placed greater emphasis on spoken rather than on written language and insisted there is no single standard of usage and correctness in language. They replaced vague notional definitions of parts of speech with "formal" definitions of word classes.

Transformational grammar grew in part from computer experiments to produce mechanical translations of foreign languages. It is a scientific grammar concerned with logical generalizations about the way language operates. Transformational grammar relies on the most objective aspect of language, form, in contrast to reliance of traditional grammar on the most subjective element in language, meaning.

Transformationalists do not look upon traditional grammar as useless. Rather they claim to build upon the theoretical foundation of traditional grammar incorporating many of its terms and practical applications.

This new grammar claims to substitute clear and precise thinking for vague and sloppy thinking. It seeks to develop an individual's insight into the workings of language. It is too early to measure the values of programs dealing with transformational grammar now being conducted throughout the

United States by the U.S. Office of Education. Enthusiasts involved in these programs are looking for improvement in the native speaker's proficiency in handling the structural devices of his own language.

On the other hand there is criticism of this new grammar and educators are not in agreement concerning its usefulness.

After examining traditional, structural and transformational grammar in light of the goals assumed in the Introduction, it is concluded that there is need for reform. Suggestions are made for utilizing that which is worthwhile from each in a language program for elementary school and high school.